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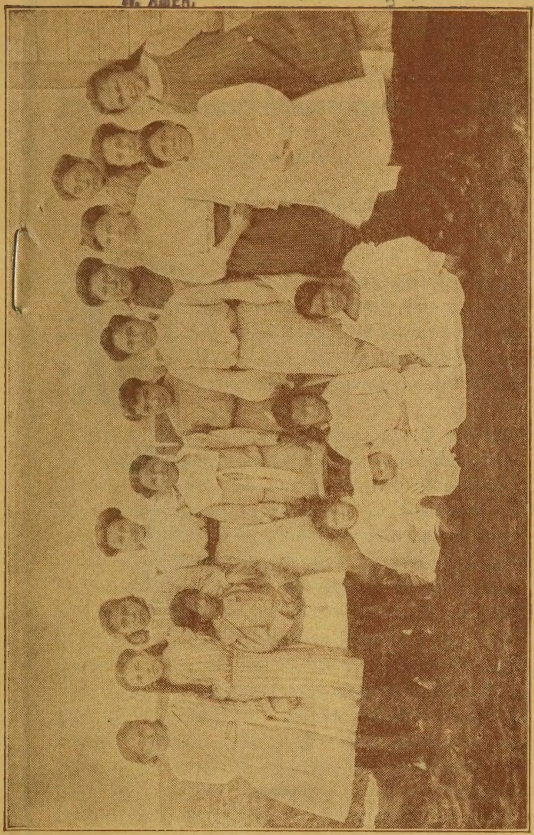

ALASKAN CHILDREN

WOMAN'S HOME MISSIONARY SOCIETY
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Education and Missions in Alaska

Mrs. R. H. Young

FROM the first these agencies have gone hand in hand. The Bureau of Education and the various missionary organizations co-operate in all work for the uplift of the natives.

When Russia owned Alaska many schools were established, the first being at Kadiak, the capital, in 1794. These schools were closed and the teachers recalled when Alaska was sold to the United States in 1867. The Russian Orthodox Church built chapels and started work for the natives in every settlement from Prince William Sound to the western limit of the Aleutian Islands—1800 miles—and up the western coast as far north as the mouth of the Yukon. Churches were also built at Sitka, Juneau and Kilisnoo. At the present time this church spends about $50,000 annually in missionary work in Alaska, but although it has unbounded influence and tyrannical power over the natives it does little for their uplift. Drunkenness and immorality, in which the Russian priests and teachers often set the example, are the greatest enemies of civilized life and right living among the Alaskans.

From 1839 to 1867 the Lutheran Church of Finland had missionary work in Sitka for the Finlanders, Swedes and Germans who were employed by the Russian American Fur Company. For ten years after its purchase the United States sent no missionaries or teachers to Alaska, and the degradation of the natives made rapid strides. An appropriation of $25,000 for education in Alaska was made in 1884 but not used until 1885–86. At this time Dr. Sheldon Jackson, who had been sent out nine years earlier by the Presbyterian Church, was employed by the government as general agent of education in Alaska. He is well called "The Apostle of Alaska." Through his efforts the appropriation by Congress was increased, government schools were established and supplied with books and necessary apparatus, school buildings built, physicians and nurses employed and instruction in agriculture, cooking, sewing, bench work, sanitation and hygiene was given.

With the hope of making it possible for the natives of Alaska, especially the Eskimos, to be self-supporting instead of paupers, as so many Indian tribes have been, the Bureau of Education, urged thereto by Dr. Jackson, has imported reindeer from Siberia to Alaska. Grass or grain cannot be raised on the thousands of miles of tundra in northern Alaska, but the reindeer thrive on the moss with which the ground is covered. Streams supply them with water in the summer and in the winter they eat snow. The reindeer industry is the most interesting and helpful of any agency introduced by the government. Hunting and

fishing, the main support of the Eskimo, had been so injured by the efforts of white men, with their superior skill and equipment, that many of the people were on the verge of starvation. With the reindeer they are willing to

LITTLE ESKIMO GIRLS.

settle in villages near the herding grounds, and this gives opportunity to educate them in habits of thrift.

The reindeer is very useful, living or dead. The milk is good, the flesh is said to be better than the best beefsteak, the sinews are used for thread, useful and ornamental articles are carved from the horns, and the skin makes the fur clothing so necessary in that climate by night, as well as by day. Then, after careful training, reindeer make splendid sled animals, better than the dogs, because they can find their own sustenance while food must be provided for dogs. Careful regulations provide

for the training of young Alaskans as herdsmen. The deer are loaned to individuals or to a mission station, and through natural increase the herder, or mission, becomes owner of a herd at the end of a given number of years.

There are now nearly 23,000 domestic reindeer in Alaska, and friends of Alaskans look forward to the time when each Eskimo family will own a small herd of deer, as farmers in this part of the country own horses, cattle and sheep. Even now the reindeer industry has become one of the most important factors in the life of the Eskimo.

In 1900 Congress provided for "the incorporation of Alaska towns, in which the schools should be under local control, and supported by 50% of the license money collected within their corporate limits." This relieves the Bureau of Education from the care of schools for white children in the larger settlements, but it makes these schools dependent on the liquor traffic. No saloons, no schools! And this in Christian America!

A most successful missionary work in Alaska is that under the direction of William Duncan at Metlakahtla. The story is worth reading. The Presbyterian Church has done more for the natives of Alaska than any other denomination. It has now very successful industrial schools for boys and girls, a museum and hospital, as well as church and other work at Sitka, besides twenty mission stations. One of the latter is at Point Barrow, in the extreme north; for years only one mail annually was received here, but recently a reindeer mail route—the most northerly postal route in the

world—has been established, carrying mail to Point Barrow twice during the winter. The Episcopal Church has several mission stations in Alaska under the care of the heroic and intrepid Bishop Rowe. The Baptists have a successful mission on Wood Island. The Friends have important stations in the far north, and there are over one thousand Eskimo Quakers, who are living Christian lives. The Congregational Church has a very successful mission at Cape Prince of Wales and a church in Nome. The Roman Catholic, the Swedish Evangelical and the Norwegian Lutheran churches have successful missions among the Eskimos, two or three of which have Industrial Homes in connection with their work.

The Methodist Episcopal Church has been slow to open work in Alaska. It now has five churches for white people—at Nome, Fairbanks, Seward, Skagway and Juneau. Two mission stations for natives are supported by the W. H. M. S. One of these is an Industrial Home at Unalaska (almost the extreme end of the Aleutian Island chain), which for over twenty years has been the only place of refuge for neglected children in all southwestern Alaska. The other, a mission for Eskimos, was opened about 1905 at Sinuk, thirty miles from Nome. An Industrial Home and orphanage have been built, a herd of reindeer has been secured and apprentices are being trained.

Care has been taken that the work of one denomination does not overlap that of another, in this hard mission field. The history of educational and missionary work in Alaska

affords many incidents of courage and self-sacrifice. At Circle City, for instance, the promptness and heroism of one of the women missionaries saved a whole village of Indians from extinction by diphtheria. She went two hundred miles down the river by row boats, took charge of the village, appointed sentinels to preserve the quarantine, and visited their cabins, swabbing the throats of the suffering Indians with her own hand.

There are still several tribes in Alaska who have never been visited by a teacher, or preacher, and there is still plenty of opportunity in this north land for the development of heroism and self-sacrifice.

LEAFLETS ON ALASKA

Bureau for Alaska; The Alaska Hospital; Missionary Life in Alaska; In and Near Sinuk. 50 or less, 6c.; 50 to 100, 10c.

A Real Live Hero (The Story of Bishop Rowe), **2c.**

In the Blue Country, 15c.

Alaska for Juniors, 20c.

Map of Alaska, 10c.